

CITY NEWS



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The Frick Collection has chosen Selldorf Architects, founded by Annabelle Selldorf, below, for its expansion. One of its gardens, above.

# New Architect for Frick Expansion

By JENNIFER SMITH

After shelving one criticized expansion plan, the Frick Collection has chosen Selldorf Architects to design a second take, aimed at subtly upgrading the Upper East Side museum and library while leaving a prized garden intact.

Founded by the German-born architect Annabelle Selldorf, the firm is known for its restrained touch on projects that range from the Neue Galerie, also located along Museum Mile, to high-end condominiums and art galleries. Ms. Selldorf's firm also renovated two buildings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass.

The project at the Frick, a beloved jewel box of a museum, "is not about leaving a mark," Ms. Selldorf said in an interview Wednesday, "but really about enhancing what they have and working with the building."

The Frick's previous plan, abandoned last year, would have built a new, multistory wing atop one of two outdoor gardens—something opponents said would destroy the landmark beaux-arts mansion's intimate aesthetic. Mu-



seum leaders said the project was needed to accommodate the institution's growing audience and collection.

This time around, the plan is to add gallery and educational space and open up more of the mansion to the public while staying within the museum's existing footprint. That will entail, among other things, reworking belowground areas and reorganizing current space to improve the flow of visitors and better connect the museum with the adjoining Frick Art Reference Library.

"What we are aiming for is a modest structure that in the end we hope people won't even notice, they'll just accept it as if it was always there," said Ian Wardropper, director of the Frick.

No cost estimates are yet available for the project. The next step: developing conceptual designs, which the Frick expects to make public next winter. Mr. Wardropper said the new approach could involve building out at the back of the library toward the East 70th Street garden, into space

currently occupied by heating and air-conditioning systems.

The Frick could also potentially repurpose some space in the library, he said, or look at housing some staff off-site. As before, the institution intends to open a suite of rooms on the mansion's second floor to the public, converting offices there to exhibition space.

The Frick's architecture and long-range planning committee considered 20 architects over 18 months before ultimately settling on Ms. Selldorf. The board approved the selection on Thursday.

The Frick's leaders also had a useful point of comparison: the 1914 Neue Galerie building was designed by Carrère and Hastings, the renowned firm that also built industrialist Henry Clay Frick's Fifth Avenue mansion during the same period.

Such projects, Ms. Selldorf said, require sensitive planning and a deep understanding of an institution's needs.

"In this case, there is a personality and an entity that exists that everybody loves," she said. "I feel like I knew it well as a visitor, and now our task is getting to know it even better."